

The Plan

by Pinto

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The Plan

Author's Notes: Yes...this is a classic KAA style story because some people (No names mentioned) wanted a KAA style story. Sooooo...here ya go.

>

My name is Jake. Just Jake. You probably know why I don't give out my last name, so I won't bore you with the introduction. You also most likely know about the Yeerks, and how we can morph. But right then I wasn't really caring all that much about the Yeerks.

"Ackppppbbbtthhh!" I sputtered, spitting water out of my mouth. I glared at Marco. "We're supposed to be washing your dad's car, not me, Marco."

He looked at me with innocent eyes. "But Jake, you looked like you could use a bath." He grinned. "Besides, water doesn't hurt anyone."

I smiled evilly, picking up the bucket of water at my side. _So, Marco, water doesn't hurt anyone, huh?_

He saw what I was doing. "Oh no you don't, Jake. Put that bucket down. Man, I'm serious here." Seeing that I wasn't putting it down he started to run. "Get away!"

He ran around the other side of the house. I went the opposite way, waiting at the corner of the house. Marco came full speed around the house, and I tossed the entire bucket of water on him.

I fell down laughing. His eyes were about to pop out of his head

right before the water hit him. I crawled to my knees, my stomach aching from laughing so hard. My eyes teared up. I rubbed them.

"Marco, you are just too funny, but as much fun as we were having I really think we should finish washing your dad's car." I looked at him. His hair was dripping and his clothes were soaked. I fought back the urge to break out laughing again.

"Oh, of course Jake, you are just a RIOT!" He walked back over to the car, and started scrubbing it again, with a vengeance. He focused his eyes on the car and scrubbed so hard, I thought he'd peel the paint off.

"Yo, Marco, the car needs to be washed, not have the paint peeled off." He looked up at me.

"I am sorry, oh Great One, that I have not done satisfactory work for you." He laughed. I rolled my eyes. I picked up the hose and started to wash off the soap.

After a little bit of work we finished the car, then dried it with towels.

Marco looked at it. "Wow. I can see my reflection in it." I quickly shoved him out of the way.

"Don't look Marco! We can't have the mirrors cracking, that wouldn't be too hot."

He punched me in the shoulder. "Oh, ha, ha and did I mention HAH?! You are just TOO funny." I grinned.

As we started picking up the towels that we had used to dry the car with, Marco's dad came walking up the driveway. He glanced at the car.

"Hey guys, great job." He looked at us. "Maybe you should get some towels for yourselves. I have a feeling that you got wetter than the car did."

I laughed. I was happy for Marco and his dad, now that Jeremy had finally gotten a job as a computer programmer. Life had gotten a lot better ever since he had gotten his old job back.

Marco's dad stopped at the door and glanced back at the car, then smiled to himself. He walked in the house and shut the door with a slight slam.

< Jeez, you guys are the worst at washing cars.> Thought speech came out of nowhere. Marco and I both nearly jumped five feet in the air. < Oh. I'm sorry, I scared you didn't I?> It was Tobias. He laughed.

Marco and I couldn't really answer him without looking stupid, so we just slightly nodded our heads.

< Well, anyway, I didn't come here to watch your version of washing a car, although that was kind of interesting. We have a meeting at the barn. So hurry your human butts up and get down there. There's

something that EreK wants to tell us about.>

We saw a red-tail hawk then fly out of a tree across the street. I'm not sure about Tobias. I don't know if he really wants to be human again or not. I can't really interpret people that well. Cassie's better at that.

"Why do I always get a bad feeling whenever anyone says 'Erek wants to tell us about something.?' " Marco grumbled at me. I shrugged.

"Don't ask me. I wouldn't know." I replied. He rolled his eyes, and then we went into Marco's house.

"DAD! I'm going with Jake for a bike ride. Is that okay?" We waited for a reply.

"Yeah. Sure. Just be back for dinner, okay?" Marco's dad said.

"Okay. Bye."

"Bye."

> <p>Marco and I were the last ones to arrive at Cassie's barn. Actually it's her parent's barn, but you know what I mean.<p>

We walked in, finding Rachel, Tobias, Cassie, Ax in human morph, and EreK sitting on some hay bales.

"Well, that took you long enough." Rachel said, a little annoyed.

"It took me a while to wring out all that water that Jake poured on me." Marco said with an accusing look at me.

"I'm not even gonna ask." Cassie said.

"Um, people, could we end the chit-chat, and get down to buisness?" EreK asked innocently.

"Chit-chat!" Ax laughed. "That word feels funny in my mouth. Chiiit chat. cht. iiitt. Chit-chat" He laughed again. We all kind of stared at him.

"Ooookay....um..Erek, now what did you want to tell us?" Rachel asked, still giving Ax a funny look.

Erek stood there a minute. "Well, I might as well make it short and blunt." He sighed. "Okay, we've heard that the Yeerks have a new approved prototype bug fighter."

I sat there. The last time we had gone to infestigate a new bug fighter, an explosion had sent us into a Sario Rip, but I was actually the only one REALLY there. Then there were two sets of Jakes existing in the same time. In the jungle we had landed in, that version of me ended up getting killed, so my consious snapped back to the other me. I still didn't understand it.

Tobias glared at Erek. Actually he always glares. < So?> He asked, saying the same question we all were thinking.

"Well," Erek began, "The difference with this version is that it is approaching the advancements of an Andalite ship. It could be powerful enough that if they had enough, they could possibly turn this undercover battle into a public one. They could publicly attack earth....and win." He looked at the expressions on our faces, we all looked the same. Shocked. Except Ax.

"Inferior Yeerk technology could not surpass or even match Andalite technology." He snorted, insulted.

"Ax, drop the stupid arrogance act, here! This is serious! Who cares whether it's better than Andalite technology. What matters is that the Yeerks could go public in their battle against earth. And they might win." Rachel fumed at Ax. Ax shut his mouth.

Marco looked at Erek. "Couldn't you just for once bring us GOOD news? You know like, 'Hey, let's have a pool party'. Not 'Hey, I have another insane mission for you guys that will probably get you killed!'"

Erek laughed gently. "Don't I wish that I could do that. But you know...I wouldn't want to dissappoint you."

I spoke up for the first time in a while. "Well, it doesn't look like we have much of a choice of wether we want to do this or not. It looks like this is a....." I trailed off, thinking of how bad the words would sound if I said them.

< Dude, just say it. It's true. It's a do or die situation.> Tobias filled in for me.

"Why thank you Mr. Optimistic!" Marco exclaimed sarcastically, clapping his hands. "I love how you emphasize do or die."

Rachel and Cassie rolled their eyes.

"Who is this Mr. Optimistic? Mistiiic. Opti." Ax asked intelligently.

< Ax-man, it's sarcasm. Marco's basic tone of voice.>

"Ah. Yes. Sarcasm."

Cassie looked at everyone. "But what can we do about it?"

I sat there. I really didn't know.

"I know! Let's just go trash all the existing ones. They'd be down on a lot of resources then." Rachel suggested.

"Thank you Rachel. I thought for a minute there that you might not come up with one of your brilliant, suicidal plans." He pretended to wipe his brow. "Whew. Close one."

"Shut up, Marco. You don't have any ideas, do you?" She asked angrily.

Marco sat there looking thoughtful for a moment. His eyes lit up. "I know! Let's go rent a pay-per-view movie! My treat!"

I sighed. Typical Marco suggestion. "Come on, Marco. We need to get serious here."

He looked at me. "I AM serious."

I ignored him and went back to Erek. "Do you have any other information that could help us in any way?"

"Well, the only other thing we know is that they're storing the fighters somewhere in this city. So you don't have to travel." He added.

I felt defeated. There were hundreds of spots that the ships could be. And who knew how much time we had to find them.

"That's all?" I asked him desperately. This was bad.

"We'll keep trying to find more information on the location, but for now, yeah, that's all we know."

I ran my hands through my hair and sighed. We'd have to try and narrow it down to as few locations as possible to be able to even start looking for these new bug fighters. It would take us two days at the least to narrow our field of search down to a reasonable amount of spots.

"We can't look everywhere. We have to find the most logical spots that they could be, then search those." Cassie said, realizing the same problems that I was.

"Yeah." I said. "We need to spend a couple days just narrowing down our possibilities. Can everyone do that tonight? Just cross out spots that we know that they can't hide them in."

"Hmm..." Marco said, pretending to flip through a planner. "Let's see here...I've got science homework, then some English, then a small break before algebra homework." He looked up. "I can squeeze it in between English and algebra."

"Why must you have a class on your own language?" Ax asked. He looked around.

"Don't we wish we all knew." Rachel replied with a laugh.

"Well, guys. I wish you the best of luck. We'll keep trying to get more on the location of the bug fighters." Erek said. "I need to get going though. More things to do, less time to do it in." He laughed.

Erek walked out the barn door. I watched him leave. It was hard to believe that he was an android made of metal. He passed perfectly as a human. Of course, maybe that's because he's had thousands of years to perfect his act.

"Well..." I said. "Now we have something to do." Marco stared at me.

"Something to do? If I wanted something to do, I would have gone to the mall. Not try and stop some new alien prototype spaceships that could blow this whole battle open, causing them to attack in the open, in a battle in which they could win and take over earth and enslaving all free people." He took a breath.

< Is that all?> Tobias said calmly.

Marco thought. "Yep. That about covers it."

"Well, guys, we can't do much until we narrow down our choices." I said.

< I now would like to dismiss this meeting of the AFF.> Tobias said from up above.

We all looked at him. "AFF?" Cassie wondered.

< Animorph Freedom Fighters.>

"Oookay, Tobias. Sure." Marco said.

< Hey!> Tobias defended. < I thought it sounded cool..>

I interrupted them. "Well, guys. I guess we can go home, or to our tree or scoop. Let's meet here again tomorrow, with all the spots we've narrowed down."

"Uh-uh. We'll have to meet in Tobias's meadow. My dad is going to be in here most of the day tomorrow. He has a big operation on a golden eagle." Cassie pointed out.

"Okay, we have a change of plans. Tomorrow, we meet in Tobias's meadow. Everyone got that?" I asked.

"Yes, sir!" Marco saluted.

I rolled my eyes. Marco can be annoying at times.

"Meeting dismissed."

> <p>When I got home, I went over to our couch and plopped down. I grabbed the remote off of the side table and turned on the TV. I turned it up, trying to drown out the thoughts that were in my head.<p>

I guess I turned it up a little too loud, because soon Tom came down the stairs and grabbed the remote out of my hand.

"Hey!" I objected.

He glared at me. "You would think you were deaf or something. Do have any idea how loud that was?" He flipped off the TV. "I could hear it all the way up in my room."

I tried to snatch the remote back, but he held it just out of reach. "Oh no you don't. Get some self-control, then maybe I'll give it back." He walked up the stairs again with the TV remote.

Oh, I am SO sorry, Yeerk. Did I annoy you? I thought angrily.

But I didn't have time to get angry about Tom. I had too much going on in my head as it was. I felt like if one more problem came along, my head would just explode.

I rubbed my temples for a minute. Getting a headache wouldn't help matters any.

I walked over to the refridgerator and opened the door. I glanced around, trying to find something to eat. I decided on some ice cream. I scooped a couple scoops in and hauled it up the stairs to my room. Once in, I closed the door.

It had turned into habit to shut the door. I went over to my bed and sat down. _Now, where should I start to cross off places where those fighters could be...._ I thought. I immediatly thought of the mall. Too public. They wouldn't be able to hide it well there.

Okay, one spot down, only...oh....five thousand spots left. I sighed. This was going to be hard. Then I realized they wouldn'd be hiding the fighters in private homes, so that wiped a lot of places off the list.

Over the next hour, I came up with a fairly long list. Places like the mall, some stores, other public spots.

I was interupped in my search when my mom called up.

"Jake! Dinner's ready."

I hopped off the bed, relived that I had an excuse to quit. I took the steps down two at a time.

I walked in the dinning room to see what we were having. There was nothing there.

"Where's the food?" I asked.

My mom glanced over at me. "Oh, we're having pizza. It should be here in a couple minutes. Delivery." Just as she finished the sentence, the doorbell rang.

"That's probably the pizza now." She said, walking towards the door. She opened it and took the pizza from the guy. She handed him a twenty dollar bill.

"Keep the change." She said to him. He nodded, and left. My mom came and set the pizza on the table.

"Now dinner's ready. Where's that brother of yours?" She asked. I shrugged.

"Upstairs?" My mom headed toward the stairwell.

"Tom?" She yelled.

"What?" He called back down.

"Pizza's here."

We heard him coming down. I headed back to the table. I grabbed a slice and took a big bite.

Tom came in and gave me a disgusted look. "You could have waited for the rest of us." He rolled his eyes.

"Not my fault that you're so slow." I shot back. It was a normal conversation. Who could have guessed that we were mortal enemies in a secret war?

The rest of dinner was fairly uneventful. My dad talked about some of his patients, Tom and I talked about what was going on at school, and my mom listened.

As everyone finished with their last piece, I pushed my chair away from the table. "Well, I'd better go finish my homework."

My dad looked up at me. "Fine. Don't work too hard."

I smiled. "Don't worry, I won't." I got up and headed up the stairs. Once in my room, I turned on my computer. After it booted up, I logged onto the internet. I looked for a map of the city. After a half hour of searching I found one. I quickly pushed the print icon. My printer made some noises then began to print.

I tapped my finger on my desk impatiently waiting for it to finish. Finally it spit out the piece of paper. I grabbed it and tossed it in my backpack. It could be useful.

Then I turned off the computer and went to my real homework. I pulled out my math assignment. This would take awhile. As I did it I thought, I really should get an excuse from homework.

> <p>The next day after school, we met in Tobias's meadow. After everyone arrived, I pulled out the map I had printed out the night before.<p>

"Well, guys. What did you come up with for places?" I looked at Cassie.

"Um, I don't think they'll put it in the mall. There's too many people there." Everyone nodded. "And....I have the grocery store down. There's almost someone in there all the time. No room for the bug fighters."

"Anything else?" I asked her.

"Well, I think we can count out any homes. It would be near impossible for hide any amount of bug fighters in them." She shrugged. "I'm not sure on any other places."

I took a pencil and crossed off the mall and grocery store that I had on my map. Marco looked. "Good idea. We'll cross off any places that we know that they wouldn't be in."

One by one, we went through what everyone had down for unlikely spots. By the time we had got done with it, we had it narrowed down to 15 places, that we felt were possibilities.

I glanced around. "Well, what do you guys think?"

< It's better than what we started with...> Tobias noted.

"Now what?" Marco asked.

"Now," I said, taking a breath, "We get to investigate 15 locations."

Ax spoke up. < Wouldn't it be rather time consuming, Prince Jake?>

"Don't call me prince." I said offhandedly. "And yeah, it will take time, but then again, what are our alternatives?"

"Hey, Jake, wouldn't it be faster though if we split into three groups of two? Each group do five buildings?" Rachel suggested.

I wasn't sure if I like the idea of splitting up the group, but if we didn't, we'd never find where the bug fighters were in time.

"Yeah. Tobias and Ax, you two will work together, Rachel and Cassie, you two work together, and me and Marco will work together. Everyone got it?" I stopped a second. "Remember, this is an investigation, not an attack, Rachel." I looked at the map. Now how to give each group buildings to search. I split the map into three zones, with five buildings in each zone. Each group got a zone.

"Alright then, everyone understand? Morph into birds, then go to your zone, demorph and remorph something that would be the best for where ever you're searching. Then search the five buildings and report back here afterwards. Okay? Good. Let's...." I was cut off by Rachel.

"Don't start stealing my material. Let's do it!" She laughed.

"The three words of doom.." Marco muttered as he began his osprey morph.

At the same time I began my falcon morph. The first change was that I shrunk. Really fast. As I reached a height of about three feet, my mouth exploded outward, getting hard, and forming into the ripping beak of a raptor. Then feathers were sketched onto my skin, making a delicate pattern, then suddenly exploding into reality. My feet crunched and stretched until they formed the talons of a falcon. The last change was my eyes. As they changed, my sight became amazingly clear. I could see everything. Including the final changes on my friends.

< Everyone ready?> I asked, spreading my wings.

When everyone had replied, we caught a breeze and worked our way into the air.

Let me tell you, though, getting into the sky was no easy task. I wasn't a goose, designed for long term flapping. I was a raptor who was used to manipulating the thermals.

As I made it over the treetops, I hit a blessed thermal. I spread my

wings, using the thermal to it's highest potential.

Soon I soared hundreds of feet in the air. I relaxed. It's hard not to when you're flying. Hard not to forget what you're doing. My relaxation was shattered when Marco spoke.

< Jake, we're here. Shouldn't we split up now?> He wondered.

< Yeah. Everyone, go to your buildings.>

Everyone veered off in different directions.

< Well, fearless leader, we're on our own.> Marco said.

< Yep. Let's get to work.>

Marco and I went into a shallow dive down to our first destination. The hardware store.

We flew onto the roof and hid behind some air conditioning boxes. We quickly demorphed.

"Well," Marco said after his lips had formed. "What morph should we use?"

"Let's go fly. Nobody cares about a couple of flys." I suggested.

"Okay. You're the boss." Marco started the changes. So did I.

Let me just tell you something, turning into a fly is one story. Actually being a fly is another.

I finished the changes and flapped my fly wings. I shot up into the air.

< Marco, let's wait for someone to open the door. Then we will fly in, okay?>

< Marco, over and out.> He said.

We flew off the roof, in our crazy fly way, and landed right above the door frame. Then we sat there for a couple minutes, waiting for the door to open.

< Sooo....read any good books lately?> Marco asked.

< Shut up.> I replied, not really in the mood for Marco's lame jokes.

Then...suddenly there was a giant SWOOSH. An air current nearly blew me off my perch on the glass.

< I'm guessing that someone opened the door.>

< Yeah, Marco. Now MOVE.>

I jumped off the glass and headed into the door. I quickly buzzed my way in. Once inside, I could feel the drastic change in temperatures. Obviously this place was air conditioned. I would have shivered if

I'd been human.

< Welcome to the artic...> Marco mumbled.

Now I had to decide where to start looking. It was hard to see anything, with the lame fly eyes.

< Now what?> Marco asked.

< My thought exactly..> I said.

We buzzed around the store, searching for any sign or clue of where and if there where bug fighters here.

< I found an open can of spray paint. Is that suspicious?>

< I don't know, Marco. What do you think?> I replied sarcastically.

Before Marco could say a comeback, we felt the breeze from another door.

< Let's check it out.> I told Marco.

We quickly flew in. It was quite a bit warmer in here. We soon found a person walking down some stairs. We grabbed a ride.

As we rode on him, we noticed the decline getting deeper. We were definantly underground.

< Jake, I think we've found something here.> Marco observed.

< Yep. We've definantly found something.> I agreed.

Soon we stopped our downward ride. The guy we were riding on stopped.

< I think that's our cue, to leave.> Marco said.

We both jumped off and powered our fly wings. We buzzed around aimlessly for a minute.

< Jake, we'd better find a place to demorph. I don't know how much time we have left in morph.>

We flew around, looking for a spot where we could demorph, unseen. We went to the edges of the cavern, looking for some shacks that we could demorph behind.

< Marco, I think we'll be safe demorphing here.> I told him. < It looks like a shack. It's hard to tell with these shabby fly eyes.>

< We don't have too much time, so we'll just have to take our chances.> Marco said with a little apprehension in his 'voice'.

< Yeah. Land on the ground and demorph, fast as possible.>

I landed too, and focused on the image of my human self. I felt myself growing taller, and could feel my wings getting smaller. My tiny fly legs began to thicken and grow stronger. Then my vision got

better, and the compound vision dissapeared. Finally, my fly 'tounge' sucked back into my mouth, with a slight 'shlurp'.

As I looked at what we were behind, I found out it wasn't a shack, but a very large box. I glanced over at Marco. He had finished demorphing too. I quickly held my finger to my lips, signaling him to stay quiet. Then I carefully stuck my head a little way around the edge of the box.

There, just 10 feet away were one of the at least 15 bug fighters. Compared to the other models, these fighter were huge. They were designed with obviously more weapons, and there was more room for Controllers in each fighter.

"Well?" Marco whispered impatiently, "What do you see?"

"I see a lot of trouble. They're huge!"

"That great. We are in deep----"

He was cut off when an amazingly loud alarm went of.

BWWeeeeeePPPPPBWWeeeePPPBWWeeeePPP!

"Oh crap..." I said.

"Unauthorized access into Model TF556 fighter holding room.
Unauthorized access into Model TF556 fighter holding
room....."

"Marco?"

"What?"

"It is definantly time to morph, dude."

As I went back into fly morph, I heard footsteps running into the room.

Hurry....come on....morph I thought urgently.

Finally, I was all the way into fly morph.

< Marco, you ready?> I asked.

< Yeah. Let's get our sad fly butts outta here.>

I powered my wings into full action and hauled out of there. Marco was right behind me.

< You don't think they're paranoid about someone breaking and entering, by some chance, do you?> Marco said sarcastically.

< Oh, they passed paranoid a _long_ time ago> I replied.

After what seem like far too long, we reached the door. We had forgotten one small detail.

< Umm, Jake? How do we get out? We can't open the door.>

< We're going to have to wait till someone opens it, I guess.> I said, doubtfully.

What if no one came, for a while. Our only other choice was to demorph, open the door and walk out. That would be our last resort.

Fortunately, luck was on our side. Someone came and opened the door. Marco and I flew quickly out. Then we had to go wait for someone to open the door to outside. Luckily, a person came right away. We flew up to the roof and demorphed.

Once demorphed we sat down.

Marco looked over. "Well, I'm guessing that was the easy part. Now what do we do?"

"Well, we won't decide until we talk with the others. We need to go and meet with them in Tobias's meadow. So get into bird morph. We're leaving."

I focused on the peregran falcon DNA in my blood. I quickly shrunk, while my mouth exploded out into the ripping beak of a predator. My feathers popped out of my skin, causing a slight itching sensation. I glanced. I was done morphing.

< Let's go Marco.>

< Yeah, I'm right behind you, Oh Fearless Leader.>

> <p>Marco and I were the last to reach the meadow.<p>

"You guys just love being late, don't you?" Rachel said.

"So, did you find anything?" Cassie asked. "None of us did."

I raised my eyebrows. "Oh, yeah. We found something."

Everyone glanced expectantly at me.

< And?> Tobias prodded.

"We found the fighters. They're under the hardware store. There's some secret door." I looked for their expressions.

< Were there any security measures?> Ax asked.

"We didn't notice any when we first went in, but then somehow they detected that we were in there and an alarm went off."

"So there's no Gleet BioFilter?" Rachel asked, looking a little suspiciously.

"Not that we noticed, but then again, we were flys. But on the other hand, we weren't disintegrated when we went in." I said.

< Then we'd better do something fast before they put one in.> Tobias said.

He had a point. Now that they knew that someone unauthorized had been in there they might put in a Biofilter to stop anyone who shouldn't be in there. We had to do something. And fast. I looked at the group.

"Any ideas on what we should do?" I asked. Everyone thought for a moment.

"Well...we could always just go in there and destroy everything. You know, blow the place up." Rachel suggested.

"How original!" Marco said sarcastically.

"But Rachel, that's above a store. If we blow up the storage under it, most likely the store will blow up too. People in the store would die." Cassie pointed out.

Rachel stood there looking angry for a moment. "What other choice do we have though, Cassie?"

To my surprise, Marco spoke up. "Well...I can't believe I'm helping Rachel with one of her plans, but if a mob of wild animals suddenly appeared in a store, wouldn't most people want to leave?"

I raised my eyebrows. It was a possibility. But there was one other problem bothering me.

"That's great and all guys, but how can we blow these things up? I mean, where can we find equipment that could eliminate this stuff?" I asked.

Apparently that puzzled everyone because no one spoke up.

< There is one possibility...> Ax broke the silence.

I turned my gaze to him. "What?"

< All Yeerk ships are armed with a self destruct sequence. If we set them all to go off we could destroy the entire underground area.>

"Yes, Ax! Great idea!" Rachel exclaimed.

< It would work...> Tobias mentioned.

"I guess we could do it, as long as no innocent people are hurt.." Cassie added.

Something was still wrong..I couldn't grasp it though. Why couldn't I find what was wrong?

Marco figured it out. "Um, Ax? How much time is there, between the setting of the self destruct, and the actual big boom?"

Ax stood there a minute. < I am not sure. It depends on the model. There could be settings from 10 minutes to destruction down to instant destruction. I am not familiar with this model of fighter.>

This was crazy. We would go down there, not knowing if we would have any time to get out of there before it blew up. The plan had no solid base. But then again, what choice did we have?

"Okay. With this information, we can't send everyone down there. We can't risk everyone. Only three will go." I tried to keep my voice strong and steady, but I'm sure there was a tremble in it.

Who should I have go? I knew that I would go. I couldn't send others down, possibly to die because of my descion. Rachel. She could provide a distraction. And Ax. He would be most knowledgable in Yeerk technology.

I took a breath. "Rachel, Ax, and I will go. Everyone else stays. Do you understand?" I said forcefully.

Marco came up and grabbed my arm. He pulled me away from the others. "What are you DOING? Are you nuts? You could die down there!"

"I know, Marco. Do you think I don't." I said angrily. "We don't have a choice."

He angrily brought his face closer to mine. "Listen. If we go down, we go down together, got that? We don't split and leave each other to die."

"Don't you get it, Marco? If we all went, and something went wrong, Earth's one chance would be lost. If some stay, we still have a chance. Do YOU got that?" I glared at him.

Marco pushed me away, angrily. "Jake, don't die because you think you are the big, brave leader. You aren't invincible. You are human, and humans can get killed."

"I know, Marco. I never said I was invincible. I don't think I am either. I'm doing what's best." He looked at me with sadess.

"Yeah, you're the leader. And Jake, be careful, I don't think I could stand losing my best friend." He gave a sad smile.

"I'm not planning on getting killed, Marco." I smiled.

He rolled his eyes. I walked back to the group. "Rachel and Ax, we need to talk about a game plan here. Everyone else can leave if you want."

Cassie and Marco turned reluctantly to leave. "Be careful, you guys!" Cassie said.

After they were gone, I turned to Rachel and Ax. "Okay. I think our best bet for going down there is in fly morph. Once down there we need to demorph and remorph."

I thought a moment. What if you had to press buttons to set the self destruct? Rachel and Ax could, although Rachel might have a little harder time in grizzly morph.

"Ax, is the self destruct a mind link?" I rubbed my hands on my pants legs nervously.

< Yes, Prince Jake. In other, older models they did. I don't know why they wouldn't now.>

"Don't call me Prince," I said out of habit. "And how would you set the self destruct?"

< Like this. Computer set self destruct.> He said.

"Could you say, computer set self destruct for, let's say, 2 minutes?" I asked.

< It is possible.>

I thought about it for a minute. Then, an idea popped into my head.

"Couldn't we just say one command for all of the ships? You know, then we'd have more time to get out of there."

Ax stood silent a moment. < Yes...it is.>

I smiled. This was looking up.

"Okay. So Rachel...you know what to do when we get in the store, right?"

She smiled. "Let's do it!"

> <p>We arrived at the hardware store, much like Marco and I had before, in fly morph. We sat waiting for the door to open. Suddenly we felt it swing.<p>

< Everyone in now! As soon as we're in the store, Rachel go do your job. Ax and I will go do the rest.>

< Got it.> And with that, she broke off from Ax and me.

< Just you and me now, Ax.> I flew over to the door. I buzzed down to the bottom. Just like I had hoped, there was a small crack which we flew under. It was a close fit.

After we had flown in, we could 'hear', actually feel, people screaming. I smiled to myself. Looks like Rachel's doing her job.

Soon Ax and I reached the bottom of the stairs. No Gleet Biofilter, no alarm....

< Something's wrong. There was no security up there... < Ax! Can you activate the ships from fly morph?> I asked, urgently.

< I believe so.> He said calmly.

< Then do it, and NOW! Before the alarm goes off. Set it for one minute to self destruct. And if you can, silent countdown.>

< Computer, self destruct in one minute with silent countdown.> Ax said with a little strain in his voice.

< Afirmed.> The computer said.

< Okay, Ax, that's our signal to leave! Let's get out of here!>

As we started up the stairs, the alarm went off.

BWWWeeeePPBWWWEeeeePPBWWWeeeeePP!

We could hear voices coming.

< Let's go, Ax, we don't have much time!>

We flew madly up the stairs, trying to find the door. After what seemed too long, we finally reached it. We scraped under the crack.

< RACHEL!> I yelled in thought speech. < OPEN THE DOOR!>

Rachel, still in bear morph opened the door in her style. She ran straight at it and knocked it out of it's frame, shattering it.

< There. The door's open.> She said.

< Out!> I yelled. < How much time left for the self destruct, Ax.

As we flew out, Ax answered. < Approxemently 5 seconds.>

Rachel, in bear morph, Ax and I in fly morph, jumped inside the back of a semi and demorphed.

Just as we started, we felt a shaking under ourselves.

< I'm guessing that was the self destruct?> Rachel asked as she shrunk into her human body.

I went to anwer, but I was too human to use thought speech. I quickly finished morphing.

As soon as I finished, I jumped out of the back and looked at the store. I had expected it to be worse.

The windows were cracked and you could see that everything had been thrown off the shelves inside.

I went back into the semi. Rachel looked expectantly at me.

"Well?" She asked, tapping he toe. "What happened?"

"I think we had an explosion down there." I said with a smile. "I don't think we'll have to worry about new bug fighters anymore."

"That's good. But let's leave before police arrive. We don't want to get arrested." She said.

"Yeah. Let's morph bird."

A couple minutes later, three birds of prey flew out the back of a semi.

> <p>We arrived in the forest, in Tobias's meadow. We stood around a moment before we saw Tobias come in.<p>

< Don't worry. They're coming.> He said.

A couple minutes later, Marco and Cassie came into the meadow.

"They just had a special on the explosion on TV." Cassie said. "They said that some kids got underneath the store with some explosives. They said they're still looking for the kids."

"So...." Marco said. "I see that you're not dead."

"Like I said before, Marco. I wasn't planning on getting killed." I said and laughed.

End
file.